

JOUR 34I: Writing and Editing for Public Relations

Tuesdays 5 to 7:50 p.m., Manzanita Hall 213

Professor: Lori Baker-Schena

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Prerequisites: C or better in JOUR 110 or its equivalent, and in JOUR 340

Textbooks

- *Public Relations Writing: Principles in Practice*, Second Edition, by Donald Treadwell and Jill B. Treadwell
- *Associated Press Stylebook*
- *Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America*, edited by Bruce Shapiro

Overview

One of the core competencies in successful public relations is writing. This is the primary way public relations practitioners communicate message points to their target audiences, which range from the mass media to product consumers to employees to stockholders. This course provides intensive instruction in writing for public relations. By the end of the semester, you should be able to write media releases, pitch letters, brochures, backgrounders, media alerts, fact sheets, biographies, speeches, web pages and strategic public relations plans.

You also will receive instruction in editing, with an emphasis on excellent grammar and punctuation. In addition, every week we will discuss current events in relation to public relations.

How the Course is Structured

The first half of class is devoted to reviewing the previous week's assignment and discussing sections of the *Associated Press Stylebook*. The second half focuses on learning how to write different public relations tools, including strategic public relations plans, biographies, backgrounders, media releases, pitch letters, speeches, brochures, media alerts, web content, crisis communication strategies and event plans.

Preparation

You are expected to be FULLY prepared for each class. You may be called upon at any time during the class period to answer questions regarding the lecture, required textbook readings, current events or AP style.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the start of every class. You are expected to attend every class and arrive on time, a professional courtesy to both fellow students and the professor. If you cannot make it to class, you **MUST** call or email me prior to the start of class to obtain an "excused absence." Any unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade, as will excessive excused absences.

Late Assignments

You must turn in your assignments on time. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DUE DATE.** Work must be turned in promptly at the start of class to receive full credit. If you walk into class late, your paper will be accepted but you must write a large "L" on the cover prior to turning it into me. These "L" papers cannot receive an A grade. No papers will be accepted after the end of class. If you call in absent, you must email the assignment prior to the starting time of class. Unless they are emailed prior to the start time, they will not qualify for credit.

Evaluation

You will be graded on five class components for a possible total of 600 points:

1. **Ten weekly writing assignments** – These assignments are worth 30 points each for a possible total of 300 points. Assignments include writing strategic public relations plans, media releases, pitch letters and crisis communication strategies. They are graded on the basis of content, grammar, punctuation and correct use of AP style.
2. **Textbook Chapter Quizzes** – I will give 10 quizzes on the assigned readings from *Public Relations Writing: Principles in Practice*. Each quiz is worth 3 points, for a possible total of 30 points.
3. **Career Interview Paper** – This assignment involves locating a public relations professional, conducting an in-depth interview and writing a 7- to 10-page paper. The paper is worth 50 points and is graded on the basis of effort, originality, content, grammar, punctuation and correct use of AP style.
4. **Final Project** – This assignment is designed to serve as a culmination of the knowledge gained in class. You will be required to create a press kit, which includes a public relations plan, pitch letter, news release, biographies, backgrounder, brochure and web site. In addition, you will make an oral presentation about your

press kit during the final class period. This assignment is worth 150 points and your grade is based on effort, originality, content, grammar, punctuation and correct use of AP style.

5. **Participation** – This component is worth 70 points and is based on class participation, keeping current with assigned readings, knowledge of current events in public relations, attendance and punctuality.

Extra Credit Opportunity: I will give 10 quizzes on the assigned readings from *Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America*, each worth 2 points. You can earn a total of 20 points with this opportunity.

Grade Range

600-540 points = A

539-480 points = B

479-420 points = C

419-360 points = D

Below 360 points = Fail

The + and – grading system will be used.

Cultural Diversity

To ensure that your work reflects the diversity of the community, you are strongly encouraged to broaden your public relations experiences by focusing your assignments on ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups.

Plagiarism/Cheating

The CSUN Journalism Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated, and anyone caught cheating will be reported to the University for possible further action. For a further explanation of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 587-588 of the 2008-2010 CSUN catalog. Remember, too, that passing off information taken from the Internet as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.

Communicating with the Professor

Please feel encouraged to call or email me to discuss any aspects of this class. You will receive the quickest response via email: bscomm@ca.rr.com. I will give you my cell phone and home phone numbers during our first meeting. You are very welcome to call before 9 p.m. any night.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(pending approval of furlough days for faculty)

August 25:

Public Relations in the 21st Century: An Introduction

September 1:

Writing Assignment: Autobiography

Reading Assignment and Quiz #1: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 2, pp. 25-43; chapter 8, pp. 206-214

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "Flogging Through the Fleet," "Pauperism in the Tenements," "Lynching of Innocent Men (Lynched on Account of Relationship)"

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Emails and Reports

September 8:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #1

Reading Assignment and Quiz #2: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 5

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "The Condemned-Meat Industry: A Reply to Mr. J. Ogden Armour"

Lecture/Discussion: Public Relations Plans

September 15:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #2

Reading Assignment and Quiz #3: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 9

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "The Suppressed Tobacco Story"

Lecture/Discussion: News Releases/Interview Skills

September 22:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #3

Reading Assignment and Quiz #4: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 16

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "The Blast in Centralia No. 5: A Mine Disaster No One Stopped"

Lecture/Discussion: Media Alerts/Fact Sheets/Event Planning

September 29: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

October 6:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #4

Reading Assignment and Quiz #5: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 8, pp. 215-223

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "The Klavaliars Ride to a Fall," "Anatomy of a Hate Group"

Lecture/Discussion: Backgrounders/Biographies

October 13:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #5

Reading Assignment and Quiz #6: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 11, pp. 307-316

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "And No Birds Sing"

Lecture/Discussion: Speeches

October 20:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #6

Reading Assignment and Quiz #7: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 3

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "The My Lai Massacre"

Lecture/Discussion: Ethics/Legal Issues/Professionalism

October 27:

Writing Assignment: *Career Paper Due*

Reading Assignment and Quiz #8: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 12

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "The Prison Business"

Lecture/Discussion: Crisis Communications

November 3:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #7

Reading Assignment and Quiz #9: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 15, pp. 411-417

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "Corporate Crime of the Century"

Lecture/Discussion: Brochures

November 10:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #8

Extra Credit Reading Assignment and Quiz: *Shaking the Foundations*, "Death Row Justice Derailed"

Lecture/Discussion: Pitch Letters/Media Relations

November 17:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #9

Reading Assignment and Quiz #10: *Public Relations Writing*, chapter 13

Lecture/Discussion: Internet/Blogging/New Media Content

November 24: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

December 1:

Writing Assignment: Assignment #10

Resume Writing and Job Interview Workshop

December 8: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

December 15: 5:15 to 7:15 p.m. **Final Projects Due/Presentations**